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The Name of the Red Sea.—By SARAH F. HOYT, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Md.

THE name *Red Sea* is a translation of Ἐρυθρὰ θάλασσα, which is used in the Greek Bible for the Hebrew *yam sūph*, that is, *Bulrushy Sea*. The Greeks used the name *Erythrean Sea*, not only of the Gulf between Arabia and Egypt, but also of the Arabian Sea between Arabia and India, including the Persian Gulf. At the time of the Exodus (c. 1200 B. C.) the Red Sea extended farther north, the Bitter Lakes and the Crocodile Lake north of them were then connected with the Gulf of Suez. When the Suez Canal was dug in 1867, beds of rock-salt and strata with recent shells and corals were laid open. The bed of the Red Sea is becoming shallower by the gradual rise of the land. We know that at the time of King Jehoshaphat of Judah (c. 850 B. C.) the Gulf of 'Aḳabah stretched up to Ezion-geber, some twenty miles north of 'Aḳabah. Similarly the Persian Gulf at the time of Sennacherib (c. 700 B. C.) extended so far north that the four rivers Euphrates, Tigris, Kerkha, and Karûn, emptied separately into the Gulf.¹

Professor Haupt thinks that the ancestors of the Jews (OLZ 12, 163)² crossed the Red Sea at the small peninsula,

(1) See Professor Haupt's paper *The Rivers of Paradise* in JAOS 16, ciii, and his note in the translation of *Ezekiel*, in the Polychrome Bible, p. 154, ll. 33—51; also the conclusion of his article *Wo lag das Paradies?* in *Über Land und Meer*, 1894/5, No. 15; and his paper on *Archæology and Mineralogy* in JHUC, No. 163, p. 52^a, below; cf. Driver, *Genesis* (London, 1904) p. 60; Skinner, *Genesis* (Edinburgh, 1910) p. 65; also Ungnad and Gressmann, *Das Gûlgamesch-Epos* (Göttingen, 1911) pp. 114. 162. 164.

(2) Note the following **Abbreviations**: AJSL = *American Journal of Semitic Languages*. — BA = Delitzsch and Haupt, *Beiträge zur Assyriologie*. — JAOS = *Journal of the American Oriental Society*. — JHUC = *Johns Hopkins University Circulars* (Baltimore). — KAT³ = Eb. Schrader, *Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament*, third edition,

seventy-five miles south of the northern end of the modern Suez Canal, between the larger and the smaller basins of the Bitter Lakes.¹ The water northeast of this peninsula, it may be supposed, was driven by a strong east-wind into the larger basin of the Bitter Lakes, while the water in the shallow lower basin receded at low tide. Although the Bitter Lakes and the Red Sea are now connected only by the modern Suez Canal, the tide extends to the southern end of the Bitter Lakes. In the St. Lawrence the tide is noticeable as far as Three Rivers, about midway between Quebec and Montreal. The present northern end of the Gulf of Suez is practically dry at low tide. Major-General Tulloch observed that under a strong east-wind the waters of Lake Menzâlah, at the northern end of the Suez Canal, receded for a distance of several miles. According to Exod. 14, 21, JHVN caused the Red Sea to go back by a strong east-wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. But when the Egyptians tried to follow the Hebrews, the wind shifted, and the water, which had been driven away by the strong east-wind, came back, so that Pharaoh's chariots were cast into the sea, and they sank as lead in the mighty waters (Exod. 15, 10).

Professor Haupt (OLZ 12, 246) has pointed out an interesting parallel to this catastrophe in Herod. 8, 129. Herodotus relates that after the battle of Salamis (480 B. C.) Xerxes' general, Artabazus, besieged the Corinthian colony Potidea, on the narrow isthmus of the Macedonian peninsula Pallene. After the siege had lasted for three months, the water was very low for a long time, so that a part of the Toronaic Gulf, on the eastern shore of the peninsula, was dried up. The Persian besiegers, therefore, attempted to advance to the peninsula Pallene through the Toronaic Gulf, in order to attack Potidea from the south. After they had completed two fifths of the march, the tide overwhelmed them, so that those who

edited by Zimmern and Winckler (Berlin, 1903). — OLZ = *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*. — PAPS = *Proceedings of the American Philological Society* (Philadelphia). — ZDMG = *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*.

(1) See Professor Haupt's papers on *Archæology and Mineralogy* in JHUC, No. 163, p. 52; *Moses' Song of Triumph* in AJSL 20, 149; *The Burning Bush and the Origin of Judaism* in PAPS 48, 368; *Midian and Sinai* in ZDMG 63, 529.

could not swim were drowned, while the others were slain by the Potideans. This flood was regarded by the Greeks as a judgment of the gods, just as the Hebrews attributed the annihilation of their Egyptian pursuers to a miracle of JHVH. The unexpected high-tide which saved the Potideans and the Hebrews seemed miraculous, just as Captain George E. Goddard, of the Lone Hill station, called the sudden floating of the North German Lloyd S. S. "Princess Irene" a *miracle of good luck*. The great ship had been held in the grip of the sand of the inner bar of Fire Island for more than three days, and for many hours 2,000 lives, and property worth nearly \$ 2,000,000 had been in jeopardy; but on Palm-Sunday afternoon the ship was suddenly floated by an unusually high tide, stirred by a southeasterly storm at sea.

According to Strabo (779) the name *Red Sea* was derived from the color of the water, which was supposed to be due to the light of the sun, or to the reflex of the mountains surrounding the sea. Some said that there was a red spring whence red water emptied into the sea. Others derived the name from a Persian, Erythras, who was said to have been a son of Perseus.¹ The famous German geographer Karl Ritter (1779—1859) thought that the name *Red Sea* was connected with the name of the Himyarites in southwestern Arabia. This view has recently been endorsed by Professor Martin Hartmann, of Berlin, in the second volume (p. 375) of his work on the Islamic Orient. But Himyar (حيمير) does not mean *red*. Arabic *ahmar* (احمر) does not denote a *red-skin*, but, rather, a *paleface*.² Arab. *hamrā'u* denotes *white non-Arabs* in Syria and Mesopotamia; *ahmar* is opposed to *aswad*, black; *ahmar wa-aswad* means *Arabs and negroes*.

In his paper on *Archæology and Mineralogy* (JHUC, No. 163, p. 52^b) Professor Haupt derived the Hebrew name *yam sūph*, Bulrushy Sea, from the bulrushes in the Crocodile Lake (*Timsāh*) which formed the northern end of the Red Sea at the time of the Exodus. Before the construction of the modern

(1) Strabo says: Ἐρυθρὰν γὰρ λέγειν τινὰς τὴν θάλατταν ἀπὸ τῆς χροῖας τῆς ἐμφαινομένης κατ' ἀνάκλασιν, εἶτε ἀπὸ τοῦ ἡλίου κατὰ κορυφὴν ὄντος, εἶτε ἀπὸ τῶν ὀρῶν ἐρυθραυμένων ἐκ τῆς ἀποκαύσεως· ἀμφοτέρως γὰρ εἰκάζειν· Κτησίαν δὲ τὸν Κρίδιον πηγὴν ἱστορεῖν ἐκδιδοῦσαν εἰς τὴν θάλατταν ἐρευθεὶς καὶ μιλτῶδες ὕδωρ.

(2) See Professor Haupt's paper on the passage of the Hebrews the Red Sea in OLZ 12, 246.

Suez Canal, Lake *Timsâh* was a shallow sheet of brackish water, full of bulrushes. Rameses II (c. 1300 B. C.) dug a canal from Bubastis on the Nile to Lake *Timsâh*. This made the water brackish, while the Bitter Lakes south of it remained bitter owing to the large amount of bitter salt (magnesium sulphate) contained therein. Bulrushes, of course, do not grow in salt water, but marshes are full of them. Strabo (804) states that the canal from the Nile, which established a waterway between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, made the Bitter Lakes sweet. Strabo confounds here the Bitter Lakes with the Crocodile Lake north of them.¹

In his paper on *Archæology and Mineralogy*, Professor Haupt connected the name *Red Sea* with the red color of the salt lagoons between the modern Suez Canal and the Bedouin Hill, northwest of Suez. These salt lagoons were originally a part of the Red Sea. The red color of their stagnant water is imparted by swarms of minute cladoceros, entomostracous crustaceans, apparently a variety of the common waterflea (*Daphnia pulex*) which is attracting some attention in Baltimore at present, inasmuch as the water pipes in certain sections of the city are full of them.

But Professor Haupt has since come to the conclusion that the first explanation given by Strabo is correct. The name *Red Sea* is indeed derived from the color of the water. The water of the Red Sea is, as a rule, of a deep bluish-green color; but an article on *red water*, printed in the Berlin weekly *Das Echo*, March 24, 1910, p. 1093, states that the water of the Red Sea near the coast, especially in sheltered coves, has a red color, due to microscopic algæ. The same phenomenon may be observed in the open sea, if the weather be perfectly calm. The sea appears then to be covered with a coat of reddish (or yellowish) color, so that the ship seems to ride through a mass of blood. This red color may be observed also near the western coast of British India, and some years ago the same phenomenon was noticed near Rhode Island in Narraganset Bay. If the water is covered with these algæ, a great many fishes die. The algæ are often decomposed, and the water becomes offensive. It has been suggested that the first Egyptian plague, as described in Exod. 7, 17—21, may have

(1) See Professor Haupt's paper on Midian and Sinai in ZDMG 63, p. 529, ll. 14. 28; cf. OLZ 12, 251.

been due to these algæ. A similar opinion was expressed by Prof. A. H. Mc Neile, of Cambridge, England, in his commentary on Exodus (London, 1908) p. 44. In the third part of his German translation of the Old Testament (Göttingen, 1787) J. D. Michaelis remarked on Exod. 7, 17, It is not impossible that God effected all this by a natural cause.

According to E. Wolf,¹ the red color of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean is due to *Trichodesmium erythræum* (Cyanophyceæ).

Postscript.—Since the above article was in type, Professor Haupt has called my attention to Alois Musil, *Im nördlichen Hejâz* (Vienna, 1911) reprinted from the *Anzeiger der philosophisch-historischen Klasse der kais. Akademie der Wissenschaften*, May 17, 1911. The distinguished explorer states there (p. 11 of the reprint) that the marshy plain, known as *al-'Arabah*, between Elath and Ezion-geber has two wide borders of luxuriant bulrushes, extending several miles north of Ezion-geber. These bulrushes are due to the presence of innumerable fresh-water springs. The marshy plain between Elath and Ezion-geber was formerly the northern end of the Gulf of 'Akabah, and the Hebrew name *Bulrushy Sea* may be due, not only to the bulrushes in the Crocodile Lake, north of Suez, but also to the bulrushes at the northeastern end of the Red Sea, north of Elath. Innumerable fresh-water springs, which are covered by the sea at high tide, are found also along the northeastern coast of the Red Sea, south of Elath.

(1) *Die Wasserblüte als wichtiger Faktor im Kreislaufe des organischen Lebens* in the *Berichte der Senckenbergischen Gesellschaft* in Frankfurt a/M, 1908, pp. 57—75; cf. the review in the *Botanische Centralblatt*, 1910, p. 170. I am indebted for this reference to Dr. B. E. Livingston, Professor of Plant Physiology in the Johns Hopkins University.